(b) whether it is a fact that a person who was caught red-handed while accepting bribe, has been appointed as M.S. of R.P. Centre of Opthalmic Science at AIIMS; if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI N.T SHANMUGAM): (a) The post of Medical Superintendent at AIIMS is a direct recruitment post. As and when the post of Medical Superintendent at AIIMS is vacant, it is advertised in all leading National dailies and also notified to the Indian High Commission in U.K. and the Indian Embassy in USA. The applications received are scrutinized by an Internal Screening Committee which recommends candidates to be called for interview. The candidates are interviewed by a Standing Selection Committee set up by the Institute Body. The recommendations of the Standing Selection Committee are placed before the Governing Body (Appointing Authority) for its decision.

(b) On 20th July, 1998, the Anti-Corruption Branch of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi arrested the Medical Superintendent of AIIMS, New Delhi on alleged charges of asking for and receiving illegal gratification from a supplier.

The Institute obtained the opinion of Central Vigilance Commission and the ministry of Law in this matter through the Department of Health. On 22nd march, 2000 the Institute revoked the suspension of the official concerned and posted him as Medical Superintendent at R.P. Centre for Opthalmic Sciences, subject to ratification by the Governing Body. The Governing Body, in its meeting held on 03.04.2000, considered the matter and in accordance with the decisions taken theirin, again placed this official under suspension *vide* order dated 3rd April, 2000. Further, sanction for prosecutionn was also communicated to the Anti-Corruption Branch, Government of NCT of Delhi on 4th April, 2000.

The official concerned has since filed a Writ Petition in the High Court of Delhi and the matter is subjudice.

Gauge Conversion in Orissa

*488 SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of proposals for Gauge Conversion from Orissa pending with Government;

(b) the present status of those projects;

(c) the detials of fund allocation made for these projects in 2000-2001; and

(d) the target date fixed for completion of those projects?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE): (a) and (b) No proposal for gauge conversion in Orissa is pending with the Government. Conversion of both the NG lines viz. Rupsa-Bangriposi and Naupada-Gunupur is sanctioned. On Rupsa-Bangriposi, work is in progress and on Naupada-Gunupur, the work will be taken up after obtaining necessary clearances action for which has already been initiated.

(c) and (d) Rs. 1 cr. has been provided for gauge conversion of Rupsa-Bangriposi and Rs. 5.10 cr. for Naupada-Gunupur. The target dates for completion of various projects are fixed on year to year basis subject to availability of resources.

Higher Drop out Rate in North Indian States

*489. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that out of 110 million children in the school-going age, as many as 32 million do not go to schools, as per the report of Centre of Concern for Child Labour (CCCL) published in the Hidustan Times dated the 4th April, 2000;

(b) whether it is also a fact that North Indian States suffer from a higher school drop-out rate than Southern states; and

(c) if so, by when the proposed 83rd amendment to the Constitution is likely to be brought before Parliament, so as to provide for compulsory primary education to children in India?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) Yes Sir, Most recent surveys indicate mat 70% of the children in the 6 to 14 age group are attending schools.

(b) Age specific attendance ratio by broad age group brought out by the National Sample Survey Organisation 52nd Round, 1995-96 indicates that a lower percentage of children are attending schools in a number of North Indian States like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. However, the performance of States like Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Union Territories of Chandigarh and Delhi are as good as most Southern States.